PIONEER SQUATTING IN THE KENNEDY DISTRICT

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This lecture is essentially a progress report on my current thesis work, on pastoral settlement in North Queensland. As a considerable amount of research material remains to be covered, there may be significant factors of which I am as yet unaware, and the theories offered must be considered as only tentative.

April 11th 1861 was a significant day in North Queensland History. On a small hill above the beach at Port Denison, on the present site of Bowen, a flagstaff had been erected around which were gathered an assortment of ship's crew, prospective squatters and settlers, native police and their European officers, Government officials and the leader of this frontier consortium, George Elphinstone Dalrymple. As the ensign ran up the flag, in the best British tradition all gave three hearty cheers for her most gracious Majesty, and three more for his Excellency the Governor Sir Geroge Ferguson Bowen. Thus the first settlement of North Queensland, and the Kennedy district in particular, was begun.

The Kennedy district had been declared in 1858 when Queensland was still a part of N.S.W., however it wasn't until 1861, two years after Queensland's colonial autonomy was granted, that the new state government was able to go ahead with the development of the Kennedy. The map indicates the declared districts of settlement in Queensland in 1861, and of these the Kennedy was the northern most district. The remainder of the north and west still had no European settlement, and was generally referred to by the colonists as 'terra incognita'.

I mentioned that there were squatters amongst the small proclamation gathering on the shores of Port Denison. In Australia the term 'squatter' was originally a derogatory one, indicative of bush harpies and grog peddlars. However during the great pastoral age in N.S.W. of the 1830s and 1840s the term was applied to the pastoralists who moved out from the restricted areas of settlement around Sydney and illegally settled on what was then inalienable Crown Land. The squatting rush spread rapidly, and by the 1840s vast areas of N.S.W., Victoria and border South Australia had been taken up, and the Leslie Brothers had settled on the rich black soil

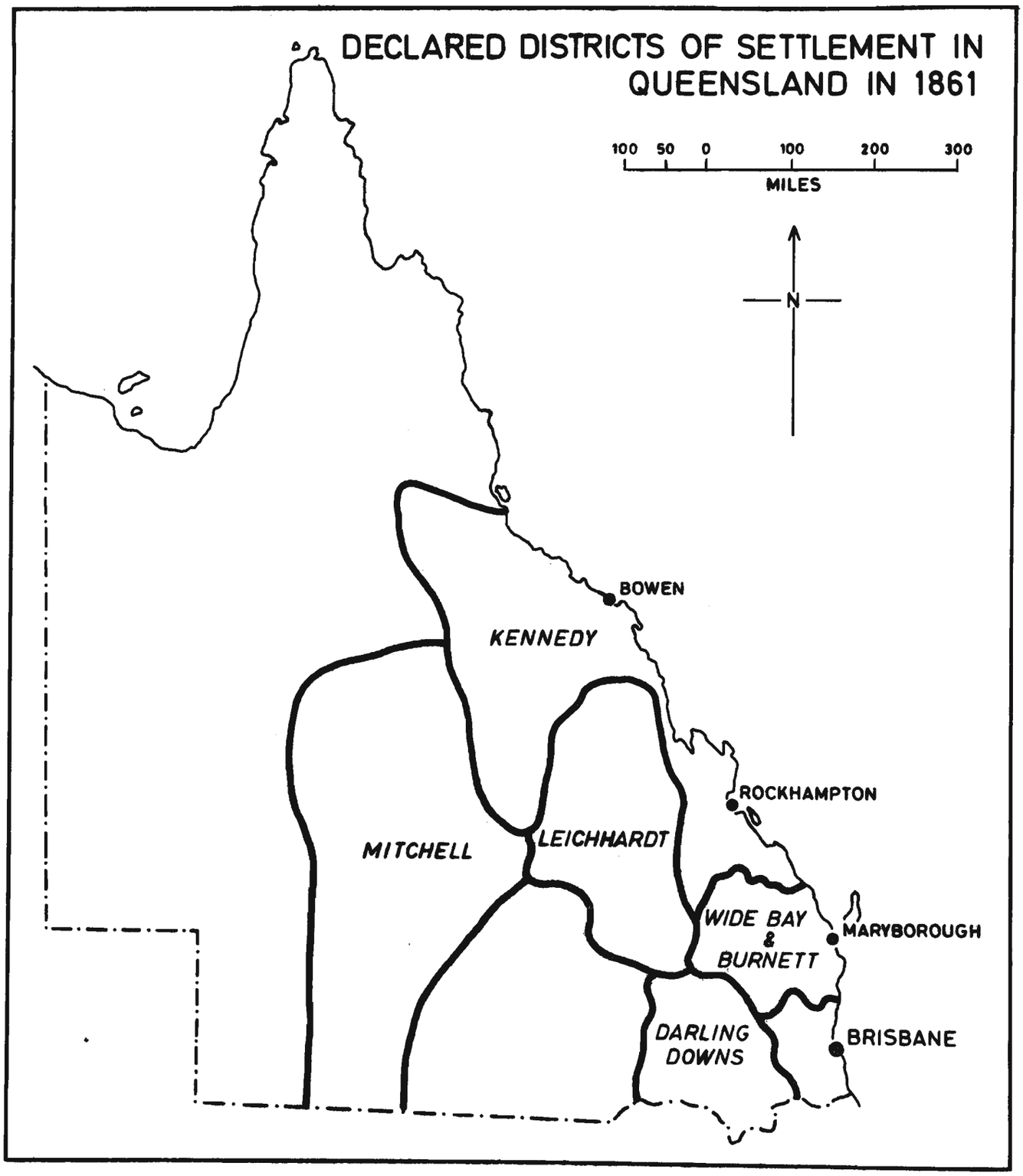
country of the Darling Downs. The British Colonial Office reacted to this illegal seizure of land with furious protests, but there was no force that could now reverse the squatting movement, as the successive governors of the time, Bourke and Gipps pointed out to their superiors in London. With time the squatters won the legal battle to hold their land, and eventually they achieved prosperity and class respectability. Thus the term 'squatter' lost it's earlier connotation of lawlessness, and it remained in Australian terminology to refer simply to those who owned pastoral grazing property. The men who settled the Kennedy country were such pastoralists, and thus it can be described as a squatting frontier.

I propose to look first into the background of Kennedy development - to consider Government attitudes and policy, and also the origins and ambitions of the squatters. This done I shall investigate the actual pioneering experience of squatting in North Queensland and some of the dominant patterns which emerge during the first ten years of occupation. Time permits us to look in detail at only one squatting families experience in the Kennedy, but I believe we can gain useful insight into frontier society through this exercise.

What then motivated the squatters to come to the Kennedy? After all it was a very remote area with very little known of the interior. Early explorers to the region had been plagued by unknown tropical fevers and there were well established doubts as to whether Europeans could survive in this harsh tropical environment. In addition past frontier experience gave every reason to believe the "blacks would be bad".

Despite this the squatters headed north with optimism. The great pastoral age in the southern states had shown the viability of Australian wool production and the gold boom of the fifties provided ready capital for pastoral investment. The explorers who first traversed the Kennedy country, such as Leichhardt, Gilbert, Gregory and Dalrymple himself, had all spoken highly of the region's potential for sheep grazing and it was reasoned that despite distance, the North Queensland wool clip could be easily and cheaply transported to Southern markets.

Of these factors the supreme confidence in the future of wool was very significant, but also the squatting example in the southern states had left a deep impression on the minds of ambitious settlers from the Old


DECLARED DISTRICTS OF SETTLEMENT IN QUEENSLAND IN 1861
100 50 0 100 200 300
MILES
N
BOWEN
KENNEDY
ROCKHAMPTON
MITCHELL
LEICHHARDT
WIDE BAY & BURNETT
MARYBOROUGH
DARLING DOWNS
BRISBANE

Country, who were hopeful of making a new start in this land of opportunity. They had come from a society where ownership of landed property represented social prestige, respectability and political responsibility, and thus many strove to achieve landed status in Australia. Moreover, the success story of such as the Macarthurs, the Wentworths, the Leslies and the Henty Bros., was part of the Australian legend. How men took up virgin land for sheep grazing and through hard work and perseverance achieved those ambitions of wealth, social status and leadership in government. Therefore enthusiastic settlers, keen to emulate the achievements of these pastoral pioneers, looked to the new districts in Queensland for an opportunity that no longer existed in the established areas of settlement in the South. The first North Queensland frontier was then to be a pastoral one, with wool as the economic staple.

There were in addition, other factors operating to encourage the settlement of the Kennedy. The Queensland government was most anxious to hasten northern development for economic reasons. At this time Queensland had only recently achieved separation from N.S.W., in 1859, it had been a bitter divorce and there were plenty of gloomy Southern predictions that the new state would soon founder. And indeed the new colony was decidedly broke. Premier Herbert and his government reasoned that their most valuable resource was land, and they determined to settle the empty North with all speed so that the pastoral industry could be established. It was hoped that in the process mineral discoveries would be made, which would then create a dual economy of pastoralism and mining that would enhance the state's seriously inadequate revenue.

In order to entice these desirable explorer pastoralists to the North, the government offered comparatively liberal terms in the Unoccupied Land Act of 1860, encouragement was all the more effective because it coincided with squatter discontent over land legislation in N.S.W. and Victoria. New democratic policies had recently been introduced in these states, which were designed to break the established squatters' stranglehold on the land, and to provide farming opportunities for diggers returning from the gold fields. Thus southern squatters, feeling their establishment threatened, could see Queensland as a much more pro-squatter state, and many decided to move north to "greener pastures".

Thus the early sixties saw a minor squatting rush to the Kennedy as settlers hurried north to secure for themselves the most favourable leases with good grass and permanent water. It seems likely that quite a number of the earliest squatters had been latecomers in the occupation of the Leichhardt district, and when they found that the best land was already occupied there they waited in Rockhampton for the opening of the new district to the north, so that they could be amongst the first to select in the Kennedy. At least twenty prospective squatters had overlanded with Dalrymple's first party to Port Denison in 1861. On their arrival they lost no time in organizing an exploration party which included Edward Cunningham, William Stenhouse, Christopher Allingham, Michael Miles and Philip Somer, and following Leichhardt's recommendation they set out for the upper Burdekin, where each selected promising runs on the river frontage.

It seems that early exploration in the Kennedy was no easy matter. Edward Cunningham's brother Michael described the astonishment and amusement of the tiny Port Denison population when the bedraggled party rode back into town, like so many Australian Don Quixotes. After three months in the bush men and horses were exhausted and Cunningham reported:

> Some of the party were altogether divested of their nether garments...whilst others were escounced in suits made, or rather tied together out of the skins of kangaroos, wallabies or warrigals.(1)

Other squatters soon followed the example of this early party and rode out to select leases, and a great many more were already on the road north with their flocks. De Sagte, a squatter in the Leichhardt district immediately to the south of the Kennedy commented at this time:

> the number of stock on the road was hardly to be credited.(2)

As occupation progressed, Dalrymple as Commissioner for Crown Lands, was inundated with more lease applications than he could manage, but by mid 1862, 454 leases had been approved and some 31,500 square miles of Kennedy land had been selected. Dalrymple's task in fact was a formidable one. The Kennedy district comprised some 51,000 square miles of largely unknown country, and along with his administrative duties in establishing

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1. Cunningham, M.W., Pioneering Of The River Burdekin, Brisbane, 1895, p.7.
2. De Satge, E.A. & D.O., Pages From the Journal of a Queensland Squatter, London, 1901.

the port and also the continual demands for his services as police magistrate and everyone's personal advisor, Dalrymple had to ride out and survey each new lease before it could be allocated. He was aided by only a small staff, and the factors of distance and poor communication with his government superiors in Brisbane, created obvious difficulties.

The squatters who came to the Kennedy came from varied backgrounds. They included a considerable number of younger sons of English, Scottish and Ulster landed families, and ex-India British army officers. There were former agricultural labourers and tenant farmers and there also seem to have been a substantial number of ex-diggers who had made money on the gold-fields and who now sought an independent future on the land. But the Kennedy was a harsh, lonely environment which proved a tough training ground to any so-called 'pommy new-chums'. Certainly an appreciable number of the last mentioned found their way to the Kennedy, however my research indicates that because of the comparatively late opening of the North Queensland frontier a good many of the early settlers came already equipped with previous pastoral experience under Australian conditions.

Such an established bushman was Joseph Hann, who sailed from Melbourne for Port Denison in 1861 to take up land in the Kennedy. I intend to consider in detail the Hann family and their first ten years of residence in North Queensland. We are fortunate to hold the original diaries of Joseph Hann and his eldest son William in the James Cook University Library. These date from November 1861, when Joseph left Melbourne for the north, and with a few breaks they provide a useful though brief day to day coverage of squatting life in the Kennedy, a record extending into the early twentieth century.

The Hanns originally came from the village of Donhead St. Andrew in Wiltshire whence Joseph, his wife Elizabeth and family of four sons and one daughter migrated to Victoria in 1851. The shipping record provides brief details of the migrants, and lists "Joseph Hann: husband: agricultural labourer: 37 years: reads and writes." Each member of the family is recorded and categorized, ending finally with "Frank Hill Hann: son: 5 years: reads." To these basic statistics was added information which was of particular interest to nineteenth century Victorian immigration authorities: the family's religion was episcopalian, and each possessed a Bible. Actually I find it difficult to accept the statement of the ship's

record, that Joseph Hann's previous occupation was that of agricultural labourer. What I have learned of his character and life-style in Australia seems to contradict this classification. If the ship's record is not in error, then it may be that he deliberately listed himself as agricultural labourer, in order to take advantage of an assisted passage for himself and his numerous family.

The social and economic situation of the Hanns in Victoria provides further evidence to refute the agricultural labourer status, because by 1854 Joseph Hann held "Coolort" a property of some 17,000 acres, on which he ran over 4,000 sheep and some 1,200 cattle. In addition William had married Mary Hearn, the daughter of a well established squatter family in Victoria, so these factors hardly suggest labourer origins, in a colony where a strong British consciousness of class had been transplanted along with the European settlers.

Professor G.C. Bolton has pointed out in his history of North Queensland, A Thousand Miles Away that the north was not to be a big man's frontier, however I would suggest that neither was the Kennedy in particular the place for impoverished battlers. For one thing, distance and isolation meant that the squatters had to be well stocked with provisions and essentials to tide them over long periods, and secondly they needed considerable resources to establish their homesteads from absolutely nothing. In addition the Queensland Land Act stipulated that runs had to carry at least twenty-five head of sheep or five cattle or horses per square mile, otherwise the leases would be liable to forefit. Finally it would be a long time before the first wool cheque would be forthcoming, so even barring unpredictable catastrophes it seems reasonable to believe that some considerable capital was essential to begin a squatting enterprise in North Queensland.

When Joseph and William Hann arrived at Port Denison in search of land in 1862 they were greeted with discouraging news. That night Joseph recorded in his diary: "they say all the country is taken up, all the way to Rockingham Bay, and all up the Burdekin". His further comment that there was plenty of land being offered for sale indicated that the speculators had been at work, taking up attractive leases early, so that they could sell to the late comers at inflated prices. However the 1860

Land Act was designed to discourage this very practise. It provided for only lease hold tenure of land in order to prevent the immediate alienation of land from the Crown. Furthermore, strict stocking regulations and an annual rental of ten shillings per square mile had been instituted to prevent absentee landlords from tying up Kennedy land in unproductive idleness. Men such as John Melton Black (later the co-founder of Townsville) and Emelius Hilfling, were early applicants who took out a great number of probationary lisences. Perhaps they did so in order the better to scrutinize the country and then surrender all but the best leases. Alternatively they may have had speculation in mind. However after the first year they released all but a small number of runs. The Queensland government wanted genuine resident squatters, to ensure pastoral development and that essential productivity.

Despite the early warnings that all the best land had been taken, the Hanns went out and selected a total of ten runs in the north Kennedy, on Maryvale Creek and the Basalt River, both western tributaries of the Burdekin. Under the Land Act, runs were restricted to areas of from twenty-five to 100 square miles in extent, but there was no limit to the number of continuous runs that could be taken out. Joseph and his son rode back to Port Denison delighted with the country that they had found. In May 1862 they lodged their applications for leases at the Chief Commissioners unpretentious tent above the beach, and they hurried aboard the first south-bound steamer to collect the women folk and to purchase livestock and equipment.

Like many of the Kennedy squatters the Hanns purchased sheep, cattle and horses from established properties on the Darling Downs and by September 1862 William was on the road north, supervising the movement of two mobs, one of sheep and a smaller herd of cattle. Seven months and some 800 miles later they arrived at Red Bluff on the Basalt River. The diaries give a vivid impression of the difficulties associated with the long droving expedition, with straying horses, unknown terrain, shortage of stockmen, discomforts of rain and heat and so on. What is also impressive is the warm hospitality extended to the travellers by the established squatters along the way. Included among these were the Archer family of Gracemere near Rockhampton, the Stuarts at Oxford Downs and

Rachael and Biddulph Henning of Exmoor station. These settlers would appreciate the difficulties of long droving expeditions and pioneer squatting in general, for they themselves had been through that demanding experience very recently.

By early 1863 then, the Hanns could set about the task of establishing their grazing properties. They established homesteads at Red Bluff, and Maryvale, and it is interesting to note how the settlers transferred their English homemaking traditions to the North Queensland situation. Of course at first they had to make do with tents and rudely erected slab huts, but with time they replaced these with attractive thatched cottages, they built stone walls and planted hedges and rose gardens, and most essential in this remote area, vegetable plots. Whenever he visited the south, Joseph Hann made a point of visiting the plant nurseries to collect fruit trees and seeds for his homestead gardens.

The British tradition of the great landed estates with imported exotic game, seems to have so impressed William Hann, that in the 1870s he introduced Axis deer from India to run free on his North Queensland property. There remain today at Maryvale several hundred semi-tame deer, a reminder of an earlier colonial era when Australian settlers looked back to England for the standards to be recreated in this new country.

Many of the early settlers, especially those who had recently arrived in the colony, comment on the monotony and austerity of the Australian landscape. Lucy Gray of Hughenden Station who usually faced the difficulties of pastoral pioneering with cheerful enthusiasm, wrote down her first impressions of the Australian bush with obvious disappointment:

> But you in England could not imagine any kind of wooded country so utterly ugly. The trees were the ugliest kind of gum tree, tall and bare, with just a few leaves on the top.

And some time later she returns to the subject, which suggests that the stark unEnglish environment has continued to disturb her:

> If the trees were beech, the copses oak and hazel it would be lovely but they are not, alas! only that variety of gums known as Iron bark.(3)

Thus English trees and gardens were established around the frontier

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3. Diary of Lucy Gray, October 1868, Journey from Townsville to Hughenden. Gray MSS, Oxley Library, Brisbane.

homesteads, where they provided expatriot Englishmen with a happy and comforting reminder of the Old Country.

The Kennedy was of course often a lonely environment, especially for those settlers whose homesteads lay off the established teamsters routes. The Robert Grays of Mt. McConnell recorded how they went for months on end without meeting another European. However the Hann diaries suggest quite a bit of contact with neighbouring squatter families, more perhaps than might have been expected. The upper Burdekin had attracted early settlers and there were several well established properties in the 20-40 mile radius of Red Bluff. The two Mrs. Hanns and Caroline often made social visits by horse or buggy to Burdekin Downs and Hillgrove, to Mrs. James at Nulla Nulla and to Mrs. Daintree of Maryvale, visits which were of course returned. Practical gifts such as recipes, plants, kittens and laying hens were exchanged, and thus despite their isolated situation, the early settlers made concerted efforts to maintain social contacts and preserve the niceties of the society from which they came.

In addition to the established squatters in this area, there also seems to have been an intermittent stream of travellers wandering through the Kennedy district during the early 1860s. Labourers in search of work, bush tinkers and hawkers and occasional Europeans naturalists and adventurers, taking a first-hand look at the North Queensland bush. Some of this latter group were quite well educated but academics were of little consequence on the frontier, for it was men with practical skills who were in demand in the Kennedy. Thus these 'new chums' often took on unskilled labouring work or shepherding, and fortunately some of their number, along with a few of the former squatters, returned home and wrote down and published their reminiscences of colonial experience. Those publications which have survived are of great value in the construction of our colonial history.

As Pauline Cahir pointed out in her lecture on women in North Queensland earlier in this series, males dominated the North Queensland frontier. The 1876 statistics of 5,582 females as against 21,907 males indicate that if you were female and could take the frontier life-style, then it was a good time to be around. The Hann diaries mention the womenfolk only occasionally, presumably because the practicalities of a squatting enterprise were an exclusively male domain, where the primary

concern was with building homesteads and fences and attending to property management. But one does get slight insights into the women involved with sheep mustering and other outside activities. Moreover a strong impression of male respect for the white woman on the frontier is transmitted, this is especially so in regard to the elder Mrs. Hann who seems to represent the capable, enduring frontierswoman stereotype, around whom the homestead life revolved.

Port Denison was of course the service centre for the Kennedy, and the grazing properties were supplied by bullock wagons which inched their way slowly out along the teamsters tracks. We can appreciate that the arrival of the wagons with mail and supplies was an occasion for celebration because in the early sixties they took up to two months to reach Red Bluff from 'the Port'. During the wet season the crossing of the Burdekin River always presented difficulties, but perhaps another good reason for the slowness of the teamsters journey was the high incidence of grog shanties and bush inns strung along the wagon routes. Certainly Joseph Hann recorded in his diary his occasional difficulties in extracting his shearers from these establishments, on the long journey from Bowen.

Because of isolation and poor communications, sickness was a serious matter on the frontier, and at least in the early years it was almost impossible to secure the services of a doctor. There was however one practitioner who took his healing skills to the remote stations, and though he was innocent of any formal medical training, one early observer commented:

> But he seldom did much harm, for he knew that a kill or cure business would involve the principle 'no cure no pay'. In spite however of all his caution he managed to kill one or two people.(4)

Early settlers in the north suffered from recurring attacks of fever and ague. The latter was suspected to have been a form of malaria but not a great deal is known about it as it seems to have declined as Europeans became more acclimatized to North Queensland conditions. Everyone seems to have had their own pet remedy for ague: Holloways pills were a great

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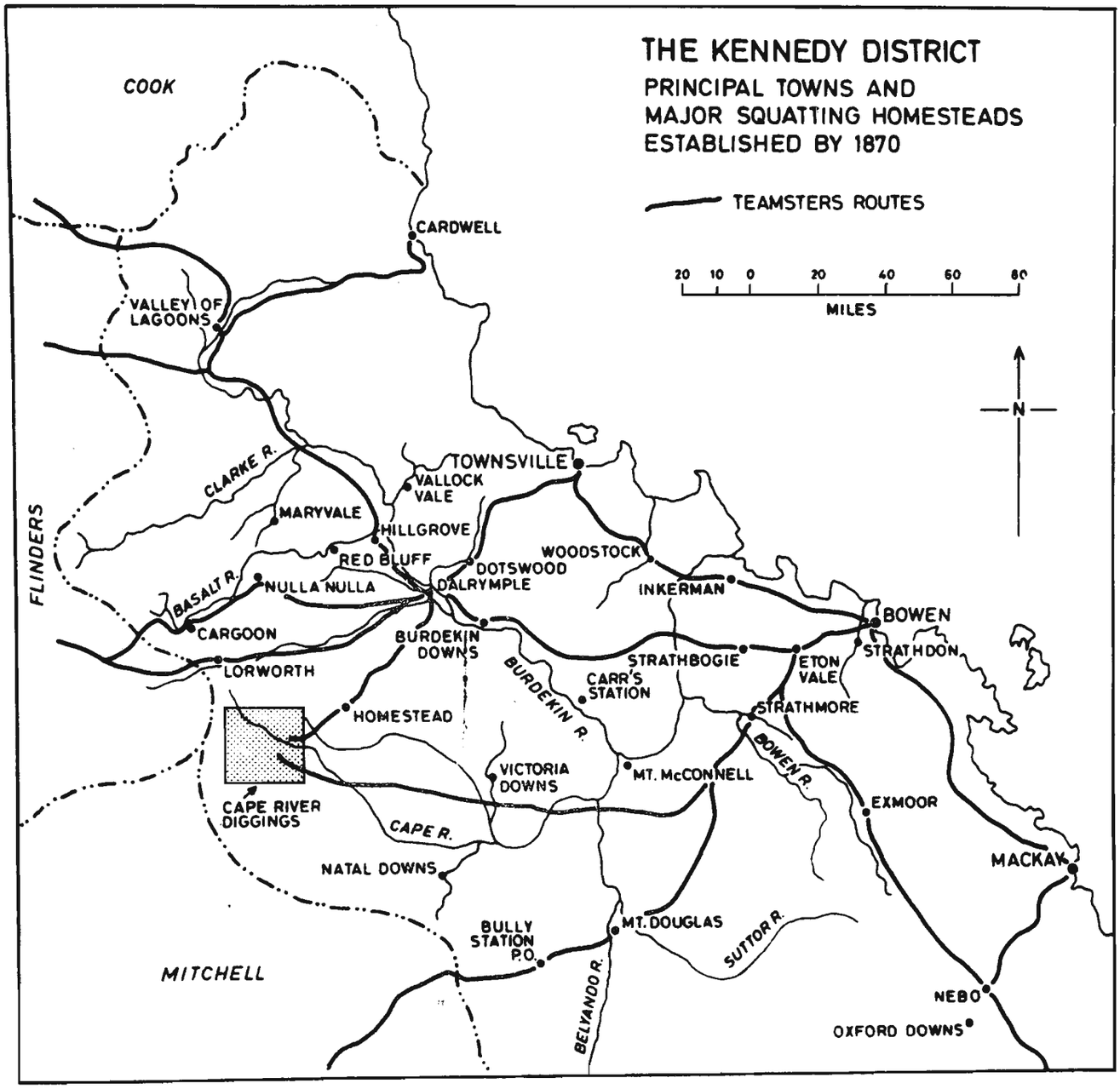
4. Carrington, G., Colonial Adventures and Experience by a University Man, London, 1871, p. 138.


THE KENNEDY DISTRICT
PRINCIPAL TOWNS AND
MAJOR SQUATTING HOMESTEADS
ESTABLISHED BY 1870
TEAMSTERS ROUTES
20 10 0 20 40 60 80
MILES
N
COOK
CARDWELL
VALLEY OF LAGOONS
CLARKE R.
TOWNSVILLE
VALLOCK VALE
MARYVALE
HILLGROVE
RED BLUFF
DOTSWOOD
DALRYMPLE
WOODSTOCK
INKERMAN
FLINDERS
BASALT R.
NULLA NULLA
BOWEN
CARGOON
BURDEKIN DOWNS
STRATHDON
LORWORTH
STRATHBOGIE
ETON VALE
BURDEKIN R.
CARR'S STATION
HOMESTEAD
STRATHMORE
BOWEN R.
VICTORIA DOWNS
MT. McCONNELL
EXMOOR
CAPE RIVER DIGGINGS
CAPE R.
MACKAY
NATAL DOWNS
BULLY STATION P.O.
MT. DOUGLAS
SUTTOR R.
MITCHELL
BELYANDO R.
NEBO
OXFORD DOWNS

standby, and quinine and opium were said to be worth their weight in gold on the gold-fields when the fever was rampant. Fever and ague seem to have plagued all Europeans when they first came to the tropics, especially in the humid coastal areas. However the Hanns 120 miles inland suffered from it constantly, sometimes for days in succession the diaries are marked by a single entry of "Fever", or "Fever and ague".

The mortality rate on the frontier was extremely high, as the result of sickness and aboriginal attack and Carrington did not exaggerate much when he wrote of the Kennedy:

> No great value is set upon human life in the new colony. Every man is supposed to take care of himself and the weakest go to the wall. If a man meets his death in any way, the principal thing is to get someone to take his place, and he is soon forgotten. The bush is a wide place and men disappear in it mysteriously and it is useless to enquire about them.(5)

It seems that of necessity the early settlers came to terms with disaster rather than succumbed to it, because it was such a recurring factor in their lives. This is clearly illustrated by the example of William Hann: in 1864 he lost his son, who died a week after birth, his father Joseph was drowned while crossing the flooded Burdekin, and his mother who died at Red Bluff after a long illness.

After his father's death William took over the running of the stations, and in the same year (1864) Richard Daintree, a geologist from Victoria became a partner in the Hann pastoral company. Daintree had been to the North previously, and he was delighted at the prospect of exchanging his office desk in Melbourne for the life of a squatter-geologist in the Kennedy. In September 1863 he had written to a fellow geologist, the Rev. William Clarke:

> I hear that they have had a splendid year on the Burdekin and the flocks and herds increase. So ho! for Queensland. I shall then have new country to geologize and not quarter sheets to do. I weary of this topography and filling in of gullies.(6)

Thus Daintree brought his family to the Kennedy in 1864 and settled at Maryvale.

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5. Carrington, op. cit., p. 80.
6. Daintree to Clarke, September 21st, 1863, Clarke MSS. Mitchell Library, Sydney.

Daintree was a remarkable character, the type of explorer pastoralist that the Queensland government hoped would settle in the Kennedy. He divided his time between pastoral persuits at Maryvale and wide-ranging geological surveys throughout the north. His contribution to North Queensland development was very significant; he discovered the Gilbert and Cape River Gold fields and surveyed the Bowen River coal basin. He and William Hann mined copper on the Lynd River, and in the 1870s he took a very successful Queensland geological exhibition to England. He sold his Maryvale interest to Hann in 1871 and ended his career as Agent General for Queensland in London. Additional to these accomplishments Daintree was a pioneer photographer of notable skill, and he left a fine collection of photographs of early North Queensland colonial life. This Daintree collection is largely held in the Oxley Library, but we can see a good selection of the photographs reproduced in Geoffrey Bolton's publication, Richard Daintree, A Photographic Memoir.

William Hann may have felt that Daintree spent more time geologizing than was good for his pastoral interest and in 1865-66 a note of disunity begins to creep into their relationship. Hann is disapproving of his partners extravagance, notably for what Hann sees as his too grandiose design for a new house, and also his unauthorized employment fo shearers at high rates of pay. But Hann's concern for economic matters was very much a sign of the times for bad fortune had struck the Kennedy. Pioneer optimism gave way to widespread disillusionment and a number of the original squatters such as Michael Miles, Ernest Henry and Phillip Selheim decided to cut their losses and sell out.

A principal cause of the depression was the collapse of the Agra and Masterton Bank of London which had underwritten the Queensland government's excessive borrowing, and one writer comments that throughout Queensland -

> Everywhere was ruin and calamity and members of the government scarcely dared to show their faces.(7)

But coincidental with this were squatter problems closer to home. 1863-65 had produced poor seasons and many sheep had died in the summer droughts. Transport and labour costs were very high, but much worse than this - it had become increasingly apparent that sheep were quite unsuited to North

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7. Farnfield, J., Lecture, James Cook University, 1972.

Queensland conditions, except on the open Downs country to the west. Footrot, dingoes, aboriginal attack and speargrass all took heavy toll and a run of low wool prices worsened a very serious situation. Robert Gray wrote of the speargrass pest:

> the sheep become covered with its barbed seeds, like hedgehog spines which penetrate the body of the animal and cause death. This grass is so intermixed with the better kinds that sheep cannot possibly be grown in this country.(8)

Walter Scott of the Valley of Lagoons, with a touch of frontier gallows humor summed up the squatter's situation:

> Cattle are certain ruin, but sheep are even quicker.(9)

The Hann-Daintree partnership was fortunate that it was able to secure backing from Melbourne financiers to help them through the crisis, one of the reasons for Daintree being taken into the partnership initially was so that he could contribute additional capital to the enterprise. However they were forced to give up a number of leases during the depression and had to live very carefully. Moreover it was obvious that the time would come when they would have to abandon sheep for a more suitable product.

It is interesting to consider squatter/labour relationships in North Queensland. Squatters needed considerable labour on their runs to shepherd and shear the sheep, and general station hands and blacksmiths were always in demand. In the 1860s Kennedy workers could demand 30-40 shillings weekly, plus rations, as opposed to £1 which was the going price in N.S.W. and southern Queensland, so high wages provided incentive for labour to come to the north.

Typical of many squatters, William Hann seems to have driven a hard bargain with his labourers, and the diaries contain several accounts of heated incidents over pay and conditions. Workers on the frontier were in a very insecure position in the event of employer injustice. If, as sometimes happened, a squatter withheld his worker's pay the man could take out a summons against his employer. But the problem was that he had to walk to Port Denison to do so, which meant a 200 mile journey from the more remote areas, and one could get speared along the way. So in fact, summonsing the squatter was not a common occurrence. One shepherd who made

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8. Gray, R., Reminiscences of India and North Queensland, London, 1913.
9. Arthur Scott to Walter Scott, March 1866, Scott MSS. Quoted in Bolton, G.C., A Thousand Miles Away, A.N.U., 1963, p. 37.

the effort found when he got to the Port that his squatter employer was sitting at the magistrates desk, and needless to say his appeal for justice went unheeded.

It seems apparent that there developed in the Kennedy a class conscious society reminiscent of rural England, with clearly defined employer/worker stratification, and with segregated meal tables on the basis of both class and race. One early writer describes the early Bowen River race meeting, and how the squattocracy held themselves aloof from the ordinary run of colonials. I don't think this particular observer liked squatters very much, and he remarked that after the races they drank themselves blind drunk in their own exclusive booth. It seems that egalatarianism remained a myth in the Kennedy.

During the early 1860s the Herbert government introduced an immigration scheme in order to bring British workers to Queensland, and for a period just before the economic collapse of 1866 they were estimated to be coming into the Kennedy at the rate of approximately 1,000 per month. However in the second half of the decade because the immigration scheme faltered and also because many workers went off to the northern gold-fields, squatters had great difficulty in securing labour. Kanakas had played an important laboring role on the properties ever since they were first introduced into Queensland in 1863 and after 1866 they, along with aborigines tended to replace European labour in 'the bush'.

An interesting and unique character found on the Australian frontier was the shepherd he was a familiar figure in the Kennedy as in the sheep lands of the older colonies. His role was an essential one, because sheep runs in the early times were not fenced and it was his task to graze the sheep during the day and to herd them into enclosures for safety at night. The shepherds lived alone in isolated huts where they very rarely encountered other Europeans and led a life of remarkable loneliness and privation. Not surprisingly many of them became eccentric and abstracted. To pass the time they commonly took to making cabbage tree hats to sell, and one shepherd has commented on his fellow professionals:

> They are almost always to a certain degree mad. They talk to themselves, to their materials, to the sheep and the gum trees, hence the Queensland meaning of the expression, as mad as a hatter.(10)

The isolated huts of the shepherds were an obvious target for aboriginal attack and early records and newspapers mention countless instances of these hapless individuals being murdered in the bush. However as indicated previously this was a harsh human environment and no great value was placed on 'cranky' shepherds, so long as they could be easily replaced.

By this time I imagine the race relations historians will have concluded that I have taken the narrow European view of Australian history and entirely neglected the aboriginal aspect. There have already been several lectures in this series covering aboriginal-European conflict and there is not time for me to go into great detail here in this matter. However what happened in the Kennedy was typical of other frontier situations in the history of race relations in this country.

The early explorers in this area seem to have had very little opposition from the aborigines. Leichhardt, Gilbert and those who came later point out that they rarely sighted an aborigine along the Burdekin until they reached the Valley of Lagoons, though they often came upon their hastily abandoned and still warm campfires. This suggests that the news of the coming of the white man and the threat which they represented had proceeded European settlement, and the aborigines determined to conceal themselves from this fearsome intruder, who possessed weapons which could kill from a great distance. However the squatters soon followed, they trampled the vegetation with their flocks, scattered the natural game and took the best watering places, and the aboriginals soon appreciated the full implications of the European invasion. Thus deprived of their food supply and increasingly resentful of European ignorance and abuse towards them, they reacted with guerilla war tactics such as attacking isolated travellers and shepherds and spearing and disturbing stock. In the violent conflict which ensued the Europeans gradually gained the ascendency, as a result of their superior weapons and also through the efforts of the

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10. Carrington, op.cit., p. 69.

notorious native police squads. But before they were subjugated the aborigines took a heavy toll of European life and one Kennedy squatter estimated that probably 10-15% of the European population lost their lives at the hands of the blacks in the first ten years of settlement in North Queensland.(11)

We will never know how many aborigines were killed during the conflict, but the figure must have been well into the thousands. One traveller on the Burdekin in the mid sixties reported:

> I have seen two large pits covered with branches, full of dead blackfellows of all ages and both sexes.(12)

and the same writer commented that there was a general understanding among the early settlers that it was wise policy to kill off as many aboriginal women as possible, so that the black race would be more quickly exterminated. For us it sounds horribly reminiscent of Auchwitz and Belsen, but it seems that environment and economic ambition combined to dwarf humanitarianism in the Kennedy.

After the race conflict was decided many of the aborigines who remained were allowed into the station homesteads where they were employed as domestics and stockmen, and especially in the latter capacity they performed a very valuable service for the squatter. I would point out however, that compassion for the indigenous people of North Queensland is not an exclusive 1970s phenomenon. Contemporary records indicate that a number of the early settlers grappled with the moral questions associated with the entry of the European, which problems have continued to disturb the humanitarians of the present. Undoubtedly the aboriginal families who moved into the stations were very vulnerable to exploitation and most certainly abuse took place, however finally on aborigines I shall echo Professor Bolton's remark that "in truth the aborigines who lived under the paternalism of a North Queensland cattle station were not ... the least fortunate of their race."(13)

In European affairs the first ten years of settlement brought significant changes in the Kennedy. Bowen had grown from its insignificant beginnings to become an impressive centre, complete with churches,

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11. Gray, op.cit.
12. Carrington, op.cit., p. 152-3.
13. Bolton, op.cit., p. 108.

government buildings, a meat processing plant and a fine court house was in the process of erection. Even by 1865 rough Kennedy bushmen preferred to celebrate their Christmas spree at the bush inns because Bowen had become too civilized and law abiding.

To the north settlements had been established at Cardwell and Cleveland Bay. The latter was the brain-child of entrepreneur John Melton Black, who persuaded the elderly Sydney financier Robert Towns to lend his funds to the scheme. However her patron was to have grave fears for his investment, after Townsville's proclamation celebrations in 1865, when Towns learned that the whole community had been drunk for three weeks. Despite these inauspicious beginnings, Townsville soon began to gain the ascendency over Bowen, as a court house, port facilities and meat works were built to rival the Port Denison centre. In addition the native police force was moved to Dalrymple township on the Burdekin River west of Townsville and many of the north Kennedy squatters including William Hann took advantage of the new Townsville service centre to avoid the longer, more difficult journey to Bowen. As early as July 1866 his diary suggests that Hann was a familiar dinner guest at John Melton Black's hillside home, and on one such occasion he contributed to the after dinner speechmaking with an address on behalf of the pastoral industry.

Bowen soon felt threatened by the growing centre to her north and the columns of the Port Denison Times rang with vitriolic condemnation of Cleveland Bay's unhealthy mangroves and mud flats, her ugly Cootharinya Hill and her less than honest founding fathers. The North Queensland community was divided over the Bowen - Townsville conflict, as they threw their support behind one or other of the rival centres.

Several reasons have been put forward for the decline of Bowen. Some have suggested that J.M. Black was responsible when in a fury he had sworn to heaven with clenched fist: "The day will come when I shall make Bowen tremble!" But perhaps we should look for more satisfactory explanations. Distance and difficulty of access to the inland from Bowen were important factors but perhaps the deciding issue in favour of Townsville was the discovery of gold in her hinterland. Starr River, the Gilbert, Cape River and later Ravenswood and Charters Towers all attracted a rush of miners to the north in the late 1860s and 70s and Townsville as entrepot shared the

new prosperity and associated development. Townsville became the service centre for the North Kennedy, with the bullock teams going west via Hervey's Range and Dalrymple township, out into the Burdekin and the western Flinders country. The teamsters track branched at Dalrymple with the southern route leading to the Cape River gold field, and once a week the native police rode gold escort, bringing the precious metal back to the port of Townsville. North Queensland had found its mineral staple.

The discovery of gold came at an opportune time for the squatters. The decline of sheep and difficulty of exporting beef cattle products had plagued them through the late 1860s but with the influx of the mining population and the opening of the popular Palmer River gold fields to the north, they found a ready local demand for their beef. In 1870 William Hann embarked on a mammoth droving trip from Maryvale to Victoria, where he sold his entire sheep flock and on his return north he converted his stations entirely to beef cattle.

Finally on William Hann, it is noteworthy that he was also an explorer and amateur geologist of considerable ability and in 1872 he was chosen to lead a government exploration party into Cape York peninsula, and in fact a member of his party discovered the first gold on the Palmer field. However it was left to James Mulligan who came later to publicize the major gold discovery there. Thus like his former partner Richard Daintree, William Hann went beyond the limits of his private squatting enterprise, and made a significant contribution to the exploration of this northern 'terra incognita'.

The first decade in the Kennedy which began with wool as the economic staple, ended promisingly with a dual economy of gold and beef cattle. In fact by this time the sugar industry had developed appreciably so that it added a third agricultural staple to the North Queensland economy. In those ten years the aborigines had gone through a progression of attitudes, with initial cautious avoidance of Europeans, followed by violent resistence and finally total subjugation. The squatters for their part had started with optimism, had encountered near disaster, and ended the decade with their properties well established: they could now look forward to a future of security and moderate prosperity. In the meantime they had developed into a distinct squattocracy class, a little rougher perhaps than their southern

counterparts, but confident and conscious of their landed gentry type position in society. In addition they were, in the manner of rural dwellers generally, essentually conservative.

The Kennedy district remains today a predominantly primary producing area, based on the grazing of beef cattle. It is interesting to note that quite a number of the pastoral holdings are still in the hands of descendents of the original squatters, which indicates that the optimism of 1861 over the opportunities available to new settlers in the north was well founded. Today's pastoralists, like their forefathers before them can gain confidence in the knowledge that Queensland remains a distinctly pro-squatter state.

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